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The Problem of Porto Rico

IN September 1928 the attention of the American public was vividly called to the territory of Porto Rico by a hurricane which literally devastated the Island. The hurricane destroyed either wholly or partially a total of nearly 260,000 rooms in the rural districts according to the report of a survey committee, while it wreaked havoc with thousands of buildings in the towns. Altogether 1,000 lives were lost, while property to the value of \$78,000,000 was destroyed.¹ The American Red Cross at once rushed aid to Porto Rico, and in December 1928 Congress enacted a Hurricane Loan—the first advance the American Government has ever made to Porto Rico—of \$6,000,000.² In advocating this loan Senator Bingham declared it was for the purpose “of providing employment to keep from starvation 100,000 people in the mountains of Porto Rico, who work on the coffee plantations.”

The Porto Rican disaster has raised sharply the question of the responsibility of the United States to this island territory. What are the economic and social conditions

in Porto Rico under which almost a million and a half American citizens live? What governmental system has been established under American rule? How does this system meet the needs of the people of Porto Rico and what demands have been made for home rule or independence? It is obviously impossible to answer adequately all of these questions without a long and exhaustive study of conditions in Porto Rico. The purpose of this report is merely to focus the problem and review briefly the general social, economic and political conditions of the Island.

SIZE AND POPULATION

Porto Rico is a comparatively small island, covering 3,435 square miles. It is about a hundred miles long and 35 miles wide—smaller in size than the neighboring islands of Cuba, Santo Domingo and Jamaica. It is inhabited by 1,400,000 people. About 73 per cent of these are white, the descendants of early Spanish settlers; about 4 per cent are black and 23 per cent are mulatto.

1. *Porto Rico Progress*, December 6, 1928.

2. *Congressional Record*, December 18, 1928, p. 799.

THE POLITICAL STATUS OF PORTO RICO

Discovered by Columbus in 1493, Porto Rico was ruled by Spain until 1898. Following the example of other Spanish dependencies in the New World, Porto Rico early made demands for independence. The military rising of 1835, the Lares rebellion of 1868, and the Yuaco revolt of 1887 were directed to this end. In a decree of November 25, 1897 the Spanish Government granted self-government to Porto Rico. The administration of the Island was entrusted to a Governor-General appointed by Spain who ruled through a cabinet, the members of which belonged and were responsible to the Insular Parliament.³ All the members of the first chamber were elected. Eighteen members of the second chamber were also elected, while seventeen were appointed by the Governor-General. Porto Rico was also represented in the Spanish Parliament and it had power to fix its own tariff. In other words, Porto Rico was given a responsible form of government.

The first Porto Rican Parliament was in session in 1898 when it received news of the approach of the American fleet. It thereupon adjourned. The 1897 decree did not, therefore, have an opportunity for full trial. In July 1898 American forces took possession of the Island, and Major-General Nelson A. Miles issued a proclamation asserting that the American forces had "come bearing the banner of freedom. . ."

As a result of the Spanish-American War, Spain ceded Porto Rico to the United States. In 1900 the United States Congress passed the Foraker Act which provided for a Porto Rican legislature having an elective lower house and an upper house consisting of members of the Executive Council—eleven administrative officials (five of whom were to be Porto Ricans) appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate. The whole administration was to be controlled by a Governor appointed by Washington. The Foraker Act, however, did not seem to grant as much autonomy to the Islanders as did the Spanish decree of 1897.

Before the Spanish-American War, Con-

gress had provided for the government of territories on the assumption that eventually such territories would be admitted to the Union as States. In 1898 the annexation of territories which were non-contiguous to the United States and inhabited by peoples of an alien culture created a new problem. In the famous Insular Cases the Supreme Court solved the difficulty for the moment by laying down a distinction between "incorporated" and "unincorporated" territories. The latter included Porto Rico and the Philippines. In legislating for them, the Supreme Court declared that Congress was not bound by the Constitution, or at least by its "formal" parts. These territories could not be expected to be admitted as States to the Union—they were dependencies.⁴

In conformity with the Treaty of Paris, Congress declared⁵ that the inhabitants of Porto Rico were "citizens of Porto Rico and as such entitled to the protection of the United States," unless they elected to preserve their allegiance to Spain. The Porto Ricans now began to demand self-government. The Unionist party, which has won every election since 1904, favored ultimate independence; the Republican party declared for statehood. Until 1913 both parties urged that American citizenship be bestowed upon Porto Ricans, but in that year the Unionist party dropped this demand on the ground that it was incompatible with their independence plank.⁶ Apparently as a result of these demands the Government of Porto Rico was finally reorganized, and Porto Ricans were collectively naturalized as citizens of the United States under the Jones Act (Section 5), enacted March 2, 1917.⁷

In 1921 it was urged before the Supreme Court of the United States that the Jones Act incorporated Porto Rico as a territory of the United States. But Chief Justice Taft ruled in the negative. "Incorporation

4. *Downes v. Bidwell*, 182 U. S. (1901) 244. Cf. Luis Muñoz Morales, *El Status Político de Puerto Rico*, San Juan, 1921.

5. Section 7, Act of May 1, 1900.

6. *Hearings before the Committee on Insular Affairs*, House of Representatives (hereafter referred to as *Hearings*), 66th Congress, 1st Session, 1919, "Porto Rican Interests," p. 21.

7. Upon the entrance of the United States into the World War Porto Rico bought Liberty Bonds to the extent of \$10,093,100 and furnished a draft quota of 15,734 men.

3. An English translation of this decree will be found in *The Register of Porto Rico*, 1926, p. 181-198.

has always been a step," he said, "and an important one, leading to statehood. Without, in the slightest degree intimating an opinion as to the wisdom of such a policy, for that is not our province, it is reasonable to assume that when such a step is taken it will be begun and taken by Congress deliberately and with a clear declaration of purpose, and not left a matter of mere inference or construction."⁸

Granting American citizenship to the Porto Ricans merely conferred upon them the additional right of moving into and becoming residents of any State in the continental United States, where they might exercise the franchise. Such rights had not been granted to the inhabitants of the Philippines.⁹ While the Porto Ricans are citizens of the United States they cannot vote (in Porto Rico) for President, nor for senators or representatives. Porto Rico is, however, represented in Congress by a Resident Commissioner elected every four years. He may speak in the House of Representatives but may not vote.

Under the Jones Act the people of Porto Rico now have complete control of both houses of the legislature. The House of Representatives is composed of the representatives of 35 districts, plus four representatives at large; the Senate is composed of 19 senators, two from each of the seven districts, plus five senators at large. Senators and representatives serve for four years.

Any male citizen of the United States twenty-one years of age and living in Porto Rico may vote. The ballot is in fact obligatory, for if he fails to vote, the voter is deprived of the franchise during the next two elections. About 50,000 voters out of a registration of 359,000 were stricken off the voting lists in 1927 for this reason.¹⁰ Governor Towner has declared that this penalty of disfranchisement for eight years is "too severe and serves no useful purpose."¹¹ He has recommended two reforms

which have the support of many leaders: (1) that women should be enfranchised, and (2) that a literacy test should be imposed upon all voters.

SUPERVISION OF ELECTIONS

In 1919 an Insular Board of Elections was established, consisting of a General Superintendent of Elections and a member from each of the two leading parties. The Superintendent receives a salary of \$6,000—equal to that of a Commissioner. The other two members of the Board are unpaid. The General Superintendent is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Porto Rican Senate (and so far the position has been held by a continental American), while the two party representatives are appointed by the Governor upon nomination by the party organizations. This Board prepares registration lists and supervises the counting of votes.

In each election precinct there is also a local election board composed of the municipal judge, as president, and representatives of the two leading parties. These boards supervise local registration and each party may appoint a "challenger." "Challenging" is the only check on fraudulent registration. Complaints against members of the local boards for misconduct may be made to the Central Board, but there is only one case on record where the chairman of a local board has been removed for improper conduct.

This system of election boards upon which contending parties have equal representation was subject to criticism in the election of 1924. To understand the situation, it is necessary to refer to party history. The leading party, now led by Dr. Barceló, has been the Unionist; the second party, now led by José Tous Soto, has been the Republican; and the third party, now led by Señor Santiago Iglesias, has been the Socialist, which is interested primarily in solving the economic and social difficulties in the Island.

At times the Republican party has joined forces with the Socialists in an attempt to defeat the Unionists. But the plan has not been successful, and in the 1924 election campaign the Republican party convention

8. *Balzac v. Porto Rico*, 258 U. S. 298 (1922).

9. In his message to Congress of December 6, 1912, President Taft declared: "I believe that the demand for citizenship is just. . . . But it should be remembered that the demand must be, and in the minds of most Porto Ricans is, entirely dissociated from any thought of statehood."

10. It is believed that some of these voters were fictitious, i.e., had been fraudulently registered.

11. *Message of the Governor to the Eleventh Legislature*, February 13, 1928, p. 5.

decided to form an "alliance" with the Unionists.¹² A minority of the Republicans declined to enter this alliance and instead established the Pure Republican party, which formed a coalition with the Socialists. Thus there were two combinations: the Alliance versus the Coalition. As a result, the Alliance won 17 out of the 19 seats in the Senate, and 36 out of the 39 seats in the House. The Unionist party polled the largest number of votes—132,755, followed by the Socialists, who polled 56,103. The Pure Republicans polled 34,576 votes, in comparison with 30,286 votes polled by the Legitimist party. Since the Republican vote was split, the Socialists now became the second largest party.

Before 1924 the Unionists and the Republicans had been the two leading parties. As long as they remained rival parties, their representatives on the election boards constituted a check on each other; but, with the establishment of the Alliance in 1924, these parties fused. Nevertheless, they technically remained rival parties and returned their representatives on the Board while the opposition to the Alliance—called the Coalition—had no representation at all. As a result, the Coalition charged that a large number of irregularities and frauds occurred in the 1924 election. In September 1925, 13,000 Porto Rican citizens memorialized the President and the Congress of the United States as follows:

"Great outrages, abuses, crimes, illegalities mark the last election held in Porto Rico on November 4, 1924. The right of suffrage was practically denied to the people. The polls were controlled by only one political party. . . . In such conditions, therefore, we have an organized despotism, a tyranny."¹³

The hands of the Central Election Board were to a certain extent tied by a ruling of the Porto Rican Supreme Court that the authority of the Board extended only to recounting the ballots; it could not inquire into the question of whether or not a vote had been properly cast.¹⁴ Nevertheless, after a recount in the Fajardo precinct, the

result was changed and a new group of candidates declared elected.¹⁵

In view of the fact that in 1924 the Socialists became the second largest party in Porto Rico, the situation in the 1928 elections was altered and each side was represented on the election boards. According to spokesmen of both parties, the government did its best to insure a fair election.¹⁶ According to tentative reports, the Alliance, led by Senator Barceló, obtained eleven out of the nineteen seats in the Senate, and 21 out of the 39 seats in the House. The voting for some of these seats was very close and the final returns may disclose a different result. Nevertheless, although the Alliance retains its control, it seems that the Coalition has made considerable gains. Senator Iglesias, leader of the Socialists, polled nearly 65,000 votes in comparison with 46,700 for Senator Barceló.

The whole system of election supervision depends upon the Central Board, of which a continental American is chairman. The opinion is sometimes expressed that if this American were withdrawn, elections in Porto Rico might become similar to elections in other parts of the Caribbean or in Central America. This opinion is not shared, however, by others who declare that under American supervision the 1924 elections were grossly unfair, and that, left to themselves, Porto Ricans would work out their own electoral salvation.

The Porto Rican legislature enjoys "all local legislative powers," subject to the veto of the Governor.¹⁷ If both houses pass a bill by two-thirds over the Governor's veto, and he still withholds his approval, the bill shall be sent to the President of the United States. All laws enacted by the Porto Rican legislature shall be reported to Congress, which has the power to annul them. While neither the President nor Congress seems to have exercised these powers, the Governor has sometimes vetoed bills. When the Governor failed to sign a number of bills before the legislature adjourned in 1918, the legislature declared that it had

12. *Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, 1925*, p. 67.

13. *Hearings*, 69th Congress, 1st Session, 1926. "Porto Rico," p. 32.

14. *Rocca v. La Junta Insular de Elecciones*, 35 P. R. R., 642, 1926.

15. *Report of the Governor, 1927*, p. 82.

16. *Porto Rico Progress*, November 15, 1928, p. 5.

17. The legislature may not, however, create any executive department not established in the Jones Act (Section 37). There are certain other restrictions, also.

not adjourned but had only declared a recess, and that the provisions of the Organic Act relative to a "pocket veto" did not therefore apply. The Supreme Court of Porto Rico ruled that the Organic Act fixed no limits to the session of the legislature and that the legislature could take a recess if it chose. The bills in question therefore became laws.¹⁸ In the spring of 1928 the Governor vetoed a bill authorizing cock-fights.

While the legislature has power to enact laws relating to local affairs, this power is not exclusive, since the Congress of the United States may also legislate for Porto Rico. Judge Córdova Dávila, Porto Rican Commissioner in the United States Congress, has said:

"This power vested in Congress is a cause of

constant alarm to the people of Porto Rico. When Congress is in session bills are frequently introduced restricting the rights already enjoyed by the Porto Rican people. . . . During the present session of Congress a bill was introduced in the Senate restricting the limited powers of the Porto Rican legislature. Another bill was introduced in the Senate and House for the relief of certain Porto Rican taxpayers, who happen to be corporations whose stockholders reside in continental United States. Another bill was introduced to prohibit experiments upon living dogs in our country. Another bill was introduced for women suffrage and so forth. Why should the Congress of the United States attempt to legislate for Porto Rico on purely local matters? . . . Why, for instance, should Congress attempt to tell Porto Ricans what we should do with our dogs? We in Porto Rico are so uneasy when Congress is in session that the adjournment of Congress is, for Porto Rico, a great relief."¹⁹

APPROPRIATIONS AND REVENUE

The Organic Act also imposes certain restrictions upon the Porto Rican legislature in the matter of revenue. The Governor prepares an annual budget, based upon estimates furnished by department heads, and sends it to the Porto Rican House of Representatives. In voting appropriations the legislature must not exceed the estimated revenue. And the Governor has the power of absolute veto over any particular item in the budget bill. Moreover, in case available revenues are insufficient to meet appropriations, ordinary government expenses shall first be paid, and the remaining appropriations shall be pro-rated.

These provisions thus give the Governor considerable discretion in regard to government expenditure. He reduced the budget for 1925-26 fixed by the legislature at \$10,790,000 to \$10,417,000; and the budget for 1926-27, fixed at the same figure, to \$10,451,000. The revenues of Porto Rico in 1927 amounted to about \$11,190,000—an increase of about \$9,500,000 over 1921-1922. About 51 per cent of the revenue in 1927 came from local excise taxes imposed upon sugar, tobacco, etc., and a two per cent sales tax. Customs collected upon imports and the income tax which the federal government allows the Porto Rican

treasury to retain, provided 30 per cent of the revenue. Internal revenue taxes collected by the United States amounted to nearly four per cent of the revenue.²⁰

The Porto Rican Government has experienced considerable difficulty in the administration of finance since the end of the World War. Part of this difficulty has arisen out of the fact that the revenues of the Island have fluctuated with the condition of the sugar industry, which provides a large share of government revenue. The tax system of Porto Rico is too involved to be discussed here. But to relieve an impending deficit the legislature enacted special taxes following the close of the World War, and revised methods of assessments, which seemed to weigh upon foreign corporations. As these corporations were the source of much of the wealth of the Island, the legislature felt that they should contribute to its revenue. The corporations believed, however, that they were already paying more than their share, and that these taxes were arbitrary and unconstitutional. In certain cases the courts granted injunctions prohibiting the government from collecting these taxes. As a result the Porto Rican Treasury could not collect several

19. Speech in the House of Representatives, April 12, 1928, reprinted as *Empire or Democracy*, p. 18.

20. Report of the Governor, 1927, p. 29.

18. Report of the Governor, 1919, p. 88.

million dollars claimed as taxes from the corporations, and a serious financial crisis in the government was tided over only by contracting a floating debt. In 1926 and 1927 the government paid off \$1,000,000 annually on this debt. In 1928-29 it stood at about \$3,845,000.²¹

In an act of March 4, 1927 Congress provided that no suit for the purpose of restraining tax collections in Porto Rico could be entertained, and the Supreme Court of the United States held that this act had the effect of discharging requests for injunctions pending in the courts.²²

Following this decision, Senator Bingham introduced a bill exempting pending cases from the above act and hearings on this bill were held in Congress during January 1928. Representatives of the corporations stated that if they were obliged to pay these taxes and then later sue for their recovery, the Porto Rican Government would expend their money and the corporations might not recover, in the event of a successful judgment, because it would be necessary to induce the Porto Rican legislature to appropriate for the refund.²³ The bill was amended so as to provide that the taxes in question could be collected only by suits (not by seizure of property), and passed in that form.^{23a} During the hearings Representative Kiess declared that in 1924 the Porto Rican leaders agreed not to change the 1924 act which provided that taxes paid under protest should be placed in a trust fund. Nevertheless, in April 1928 the legislature abolished it. Mr. Keiss said, "No explanation has ever been made to me."²⁴

The government estimates that the per capita tax in Porto Rico is \$10.58, in comparison with \$83 in the continental United States.²⁵ But it is estimated, however, that the per capita wealth of Porto Rico is about one-sixth of that of the United States.²⁶

That changes in the system of taxation are desirable was the view expressed by

Professor R. M. Haig of Columbia who investigated the revenue system for the government in 1925. He declares, "The entire revenue system is faulty; every part of it requires reform if it is to function efficiently and with precision." In 1927 the Governor also declared, "What was expected and what is still desired is a general revision of the entire system of taxation."²⁷ The legislature is restricted by the Organic Act in its bonded indebtedness to not more than ten per cent of the total tax valuation. This would entitle Porto Rico to acquire a bonded debt of \$33,808,988. The debt at present is \$21,302,397.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF REVENUE

One of the most important factors in any system of government is the administration of revenue.

The Governor, with the advice of the Porto Rican Senate, appoints a treasurer—a Porto Rican who is responsible for the custody of taxes and other moneys. The work of assessment is in the hands of Porto Rican assessors, and all claims in regard to the assessment of property are passed upon by a Board of Review and Equalization. The Board offers a guarantee against over-assessment, but not apparently against under-assessment. The Porto Rican Treasury also pays out moneys, subject to the rigorous control of the Auditor. At present the Auditor is a continental American, appointed by the President of the United States at a salary of \$6,000. The Auditor through his Division of Disbursement pre-audits every voucher and pay roll. Before issuing a check the Porto Rican Treasurer must first receive a warrant drawn by the Auditor and countersigned by the Governor. Every request for payment entering the Auditor's office is submitted to the closest scrutiny by the Division of Examination which has secured a number of convictions against persons making false requisitions, etc.²⁸ The Auditor thus controls all the expenditures and sees to it that they conform to the budget.

In addition to controlling the administra-

21. *Porto Rico Progress*, March 1, 1928.

22. *Smallwood et al. v. Gallardo*, 275 U. S. 56 (1927).

23. *Hearings*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, "Relief of Porto Rican Taxpayers."

23a. Act of April 23, 1928. Public No. 302, 70th Congress.

24. *Hearings*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, "Relief of Porto Rican Taxpayers."

25. *Report of the Governor*, 1926, p. 9.

26. *Educational Survey of Porto Rico*, p. 79.

27. *Report of the Governor*, 1927, p. 31.

28. Cf. p. 444.

tion of revenue, the United States also maintains strict control over the administration of justice. The Attorney-General is appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate. He is responsible for the prosecution of all offenses under the law; the integrity of the whole administration may therefore depend upon him. The judges of the Supreme Court, five in number, are appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate. The President has appointed three Porto Ricans and two continental Americans to this Court, the chief justice being a Porto Rican.²⁹ Finally, the President, with the advice of the Senate, appoints the Commissioner of Education. The present incumbent is a Porto Rican, Mr. Juan B. Huyke.

The Governor is at the head of the administration in Porto Rico. He is appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate and is paid a salary of \$10,000 from the local budget. He is immediately responsible to the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the War Department. The position has always been held by a continental American. While the incumbent, Governor Horace M. Towner, is popular with many of the Islanders, Porto Rico states that the occupant of the post is likely to be changed and that the Washington authorities may send to Porto Rico a man with no knowledge of Spanish and the problems of the Island, or sympathetic to American corporations there.

Under the Governor are the Attorney-General and the Commissioner of Education, appointed by the President of the United States; the Commissioner of Health, the Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor,

the Commissioner of the Interior, the Treasurer, and an Executive Secretary who are appointed by the Governor and the Porto Rican Senate. Each receives a salary of \$6,000. Except for the Executive Secretary, the above members constitute the Governor's Executive Council or Cabinet.³⁰ Under this system the Porto Rican Senate has sometimes had a degree of influence upon the appointment of commissioners (with the exception of the Attorney-General and the Commissioner of Education), all of whom today belong to the Alliance.³¹ Once appointed, the commissioners hold office for four years, are responsible to the Governor and may be removed by him. Altogether, of the 6,000 or so employees in the Porto Rican Government, only about 200 are continental Americans.³² The latter positions are mostly of an educational nature.

Several of the administrative departments have achieved notable work in the development of the Island, especially the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Education. Every doctor on the staff of the Department of Public Health is a Porto Rican.³³ Most of the engineers in the Department of the Interior are Porto Ricans, and of these many received their education in the universities of the United States.

On the other hand, the administration of the Workman's Relief Commission, a body which administers the workingmen's compensation plan, has been severely criticized. The Auditor of the Government, assisted by an actuarial expert, has recently made a survey of the work of this commission, and steps have been taken to bring about an improvement.³⁴

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN PORTO RICO

While the United States maintains some control over the central government, municipalities in theory look after their own affairs. Each municipality is governed by an elective Council and an elective Mayor. The Mayor with the consent of the Council appoints a number of officials; in case the Mayor and Council disagree over appoint-

ments, the Governor decides. The Mayor may be impeached by the Council, but the Governor finally determines, subject to appeal to the Supreme Court, whether or not

29. There is also a Federal District Court of Porto Rico. The judges of the municipal courts and district courts are appointed by the Governor with the advice of the Senate.

30. There is also a Public Service Commission, which grants franchises, and many other bodies which do not need to be discussed. Cf. *The Register of Porto Rico, 1926*, p. 107.

31. Cf. p. 440.

32. *Report of the Governor, 1919*, p. 53.

33. There are, however, several continental doctors attached to the Rockefeller Foundation who give advice.

34. *Message of the Governor to the Legislature, February, 1928*, p. 5.

he shall be removed. The Mayor has a veto which may be overruled by a two-thirds vote of the Council. Municipal finance is under the supervision of the Central Auditor. The Executive Council also must pass upon municipal loans.³⁵

Municipalities have certain responsibilities in the construction of public works and in regard to education and public health. While great progress has been made during the last twenty years,³⁶ considerable dissatisfaction has been expressed with municipal activities in regard to public works and health. The report of the Auditor for 1925 says: "Municipal investigations have brought to light several cases of irregularities in the handling of public funds." He then mentions a case of embezzlement by a municipal official, alleged misappropriation by the superintendent of a municipal hospital, misappropriation by a marshal of a municipal court, and alleged embezzlement by two collectors of internal revenue.³⁷

MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

So unsatisfactory has the construction of local public works by the municipalities been that legislation has recently been introduced transferring such construction to the central government.

In his message to the legislature of February 13, 1928, the Governor declared:

"Some changes should be made in our municipal law. The present system of municipal government requires probably twice the expenditures that should be made for that purpose. The present system is also defective. It does not furnish the service the people demand and expect and is too often absolutely unable to operate at all. The deadlocks that occur by which the people are deprived of all service and for which no remedy exists under present provisions of our laws are a reproach to our Island. In many instances where economies are required no action is taken and the taxes levied for service are absorbed for salaries. There is no doubt that offices should be consolidated, the personnel reduced. There is no doubt that more

effective checks against unnecessary expenditures should be provided."³⁸

RESTRICTIONS ON PORTO RICAN AUTONOMY

Thus the powers of the Porto Rican legislature are limited by the veto of the Governor and the legislative authority of the Congress of the United States. The Governor, the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Education, the Auditor, and the five justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President of the United States. A continental American supervises elections, another heads the University, and a third the Insular Police. The Governor supervises the work of all departments of the government and he has certain powers of oversight in regard to the municipalities. Washington also directs a certain number of federal services, such as the Post Office, the Customs, the Lighthouse Service, the Public Health Service, the Agricultural Experiment Station, a hydrographic office, the Weather Bureau, Land Bank, etc., while it maintains a Porto Rican Regiment of the Army.

There are thus a large number of restrictions upon Porto Rican autonomy and the Porto Ricans demand that these restrictions be removed. Since 1919 some bill toward this end has periodically been introduced into Congress and a large number of hearings upon the subject have been held.

The feeling of Porto Rican political leaders was illustrated in a cablegram sent by the two leaders of the Alliance³⁹ to President Coolidge, congratulating him upon his speech at the Havana Conference but stating that "Porto Rico feels humiliated because of the inferior condition she is subjected to in spite of the hopes the Treaty of Paris woke in us, in spite of the unfulfilled promise made to our people, and in spite of the repeated legitimate demands in favor of a régime that may enable our Island to exercise her own sovereignty over her own internal affairs and to freely solve the grave economical situation she is undergoing."⁴⁰

35. The municipal indebtedness is \$20,888,000. Congress recently reduced the limit of such indebtedness from 10 to 5 per cent of the property valuation. *Report of the Governor, 1927*, p. 33.

36. *Report of the Governor, 1919*, p. 52.

37. *Report of the Governor, 1925*, p. 71.

38. *Message*, p. 8.

39. Senator Barceló and Representative José Tous Sotó.

40. For the text, cf. *Annual Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, 1928*, p. 13.

DEMANDS FOR INDEPENDENCE OR HOME-RULE

When Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh visited Porto Rico in February 1928, the Legislative Assembly passed a concurrent resolution welcoming him to the Island and declaring, "The message of Porto Rico to your people is, 'Grant us the freedom that you enjoy, for which you struggled, which you worship, which we deserve, and you have promised us.' We ask the right to a place in the sun—this land of ours, brightened, by the stars of your glorious flag. . . But we aspire also, and above all, to the government of our people, by our people and for our people; that is to say, a republican form of government. . ." The present political aspiration of Porto Rico is "complete self-government, including the right to elect our own Governor."⁴¹

At least three forms of self-government have been proposed.

Independence. For many years the Unionist party, the strongest party in the Island, advocated an ultimate form of independence. This ideal has also been more vigorously supported by a number of other associations. When the United States occupied the Island in 1898 the Porto Rican Patriots' League unsuccessfully asked for a plebiscite on the question of independence.⁴² In 1922 a Nationalist party was organized.⁴³ Other groups having the same end are in existence. So far none of these independence parties (apart from the Unionist party, which has apparently modified its ideal) have been strong enough to elect candidates to the legislature.

Nevertheless, Porto Ricans realize that if Porto Rico became independent, the United States might erect a tariff barrier against her and thus destroy the economic

system upon which the Island is built.⁴⁴ Complete independence would mean that Porto Rico would have to establish a diplomatic and military organization of her own and that Porto Ricans would lose their American citizenship. In view of these facts, the leaders of the Alliance have made it clear that they do not wish complete independence. In explaining their message to Lindbergh, they declared: "We are not asking for international or absolute independence. We do not want to sever the ties of a common flag and a common citizenship. We acknowledge and accept the sovereignty of the Union as defined in the Constitution, that is to say, the powers vested in the Federation by delegation of the states themselves."⁴⁵

Nevertheless, Porto Rican leaders demand self-government. They state that Santo Domingo and Cuba are self-governing, although they are not as intellectually advanced, in their opinion, as Porto Rico. Porto Ricans are citizens of the United States, and upon taking up residence in a state may vote for President. But as long as they remain in Porto Rico they are barred even from full control over local affairs.

Statehood. The Republican party of Porto Rico has stood for statehood.⁴⁶ It has been encouraged in this aim by the type of administration introduced into Porto Rico, and by the grant of citizenship. The government institutions of Porto Rico were modelled after American institutions and the educational system stressed the teaching of English. This goal of assimilation was stated by Governor Towner in the following words:

"Here we have a people that are becoming very rapidly Americanized. They are adopting American laws. They are changing from year to year the old customs of the Spanish régime for American customs. They use American money. All of the business transactions between the two countries are according to American usage. American contracts are made—even the

41. For the English text of the letter cf. *Porto Rico Progress*, February 9, 1928. For the reply of President Coolidge cf. p. 447.

42. Rodriguez, *The Book of Porto Rico*, "Nationalism in Porto Rico," p. 93.

43. The feeling of some of the Nationalists is revealed in *El Nacionalista de Puerto Rico* for January 28, 1928 which publishes a cartoon of four horsemen swooping down upon Porto Rico. One is called *Political Dictatorship*, an *Ally of Yankee Imperialism*; a second, *The Loans which daily "chain us to the cart of Imperialism"*; a third, *The Latifundia, which extracts the juice from the soil*; and the fourth, *The Educational System which kills our spirit*.

44. Cf. p. 453. However, a reciprocity agreement, similar to that between the United States and Cuba, might be made.

45. Letter of February 6, 1928 to Dr. J. W. Harris.

46. In May 1928 the "Pure Republicans" reiterated this demand. *Porto Rico Progress*, May 31, 1928, p. 10. For an argument in favor of statehood, cf. the collection of articles, entitled *Combatiendo*, by Juan B. Huyke.

language of commercial intercourse is American and not Spanish. . . . If you were to visit San Juan for instance you would say, 'Why this is an American city.'"⁴⁷

It might be supposed that the logical outcome of this policy would be statehood. Nevertheless, the admission of Porto Rico to the Union would give her two senators and a larger number of representatives in Congress, and under some circumstances these representatives might hold the balance of power in matters of no immediate concern to Porto Rico.⁴⁸ Moreover, the cultural difference between Porto Rico and the United States seems to be wider than that between any two states of the Union. Mr. Elihu Root has said, "You have a civilization older than, and different from ours." Good will "cannot fill the broad, deep gap existing between both races. . . ."⁴⁹

Porto Ricans frequently claim that although they are American citizens they are not treated upon a basis of social equality by many American residents in Porto Rico. Moreover, Porto Ricans do not wish to give up their cultural differences. Mr. Córdova Dávila has declared:

"There is no similarity between continentals and Porto Ricans from a racial point of view. The habits, customs, characteristics, idiosyncrasies, ideology and ethnology of the two people are fundamentally different. . . . The mental processes of the two races differ widely. Under the circumstances, one should hardly expect unity in thought, feeling or action were the two races brought together. . . . The masses of the people of Porto Rico speak no other language but Spanish. . . . English has not yet reached the heart of the people, nor is it reasonable to expect this ever to come about."⁵⁰

Similarly, Senator Barceló has declared: "Our mentality is not the same as yours. . . . Twenty years of a process by which you have pretended to establish a system of Americanization tending practically to annul the personality of our people, have shown

how great was the error" of the system established in the Foraker Act.⁵¹

From the practical standpoint, statehood would oblige Porto Rico to contribute to the Federal Treasury the proceeds from the income tax and customs, etc., which the United States now allows Porto Rico to retain. According to President Coolidge, such sources provide about \$9,500,000 out of the annual revenue of \$11,000,000.⁵² On the other hand, Porto Rico does not now receive all of the grants-in-aid paid to the states by the federal government.⁵³

For these three reasons, because Porto Rico might obtain a balance of power in Congress, because it would be deprived of a large part of the revenues it now enjoys, and finally because of the cultural personality of the Porto Ricans, statehood has raised opposition.

Autonomy and an Elected Governor.

Because of the practical objections to both statehood and independence, the Unionist and Republican parties have for the moment dropped the planks which formerly distinguished them; and, united in the Alliance, have concentrated their efforts to secure an elective governor for Porto Rico who they assume would be a local Porto Rican. In the last bill introduced into Congress by the Porto Rican Commissioner, provision is made for an elective governor with authority to appoint the heads of all executive departments.⁵⁴ Thus the control which the President of the United States now has over the administration would to a large extent disappear. Under some of these proposals the President would, however, have the right to remove an elective governor, while the local administration in certain respects would be subject to the federal courts.

Hearings on the proposal for an elective governor were held by the Senate in the spring of 1924,⁵⁵ following which the Sen-

47. *Hearings*, 69th Congress, 1st Session, 1926, "Porto Rico," p. 12.

48. An attempt has been made to remove the first difficulty by proposing a constitutional amendment to the effect that a non-contiguous state might be admitted to the American Union, upon a basis of representation in the Senate and the House fixed by Congress. Another proposal is to limit the right of representatives of non-contiguous states to vote on matters solely affecting those states in the judgment of Congress. Cf. the proposed bill, *Porto Rico Progress*, March 15, 1923, p. 18.

49. *Empire or Democracy*, op. cit., p. 53.

50. *Hearings*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, 1928, "Popular Election of the Governor of Porto Rico," p. 23.

51. *Hearings*, 66th Congress, 1st Session, 1919, "Porto Rican Interests," p. 45.

52. Except for the federal excise tax, these revenues would, however, be retained in the event of independence.

53. The Morrill Act in regard to the support of agricultural schools has been extended to Porto Rico, but not the Smith-Lever Act. Cf. *Laws of Porto Rico*, April, 1927, p. 386.

54. H. R. 6047, 70th Congress, 1st Session, January 23, 1928.

55. *Hearings*, 68th Congress, 1st Session, "The Civil Governor of Porto Rico."

ate unanimously passed a bill in favor of an elective governor and to the effect that the first election should be held in 1932.⁵⁶ The House finally passed such a bill in 1926.⁵⁷ But the session adjourned before the Senate could again act. Thus the Senate and the House both approved the principle of elective governor, but at different times. President Coolidge, in a letter of June 5, 1925, also supported the principle. Another bill was introduced in 1928 and hearings were held in May.⁵⁸

In the second place, Porto Ricans ask that they be allowed to hold a constitutional assembly to draw up their local constitution, which would be based on the principle of complete self-government and tariff autonomy. Finally, some of them advocate the negotiation of a permanent treaty between the United States and Porto Rico establishing a Real Union, each self-governing but constituting a single international State as far as foreign affairs are concerned, with the State Department of the United States protecting Porto Rican interests abroad. According to this treaty citizens of Porto Rico would be citizens of the United States and vice-versa, and there would be free trade between Porto Rico and the United States.⁵⁹

Porto Rico would be authorized to make, with the consent of the Secretary of State, treaties of commerce with other countries, and no treaty of commerce made by the United States would be binding on Porto Rico without the consent of the latter's Senate. The postal system of Porto Rico would continue to be managed by the Postmaster-General of the United States. The United States would maintain troops, aviation camps and naval bases in Porto Rico and protect Porto Rico against any aggression. The Union thus constituted would not prevent the people of Porto Rico from later becoming a state in the Union or completely independent.⁶⁰

This proposed treaty does not grant to the United States any right of intervention

in Porto Rican affairs such as is contained in the treaty between the United States and Cuba of May 22, 1903.

ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED STATES

Few, if any, American statesmen have advocated independence for Porto Rico. The Democratic party has, however, advocated ultimate statehood. In his message to Congress of December 6, 1912, President Taft declared himself in favor of a relationship between Porto Rico and the United States analogous to that between Great Britain and her "self-governing colonies." Congressman La Guardia suggests that in case Porto Rico should be granted an elective governor, the link between Porto Rico and the United States would be provided by a Resident Commissioner from Washington, corresponding to the governor-general in a British Dominion.⁶¹ Porto Rico should be given Dominion status. The House and the Senate have at different times gone on record in favor of an elective governor, a proposal which at one time President Coolidge supported.⁶²

The President, however, administered a rebuke to the demands of Porto Rican leaders for self-government in a letter to Governor Towner of February 28, 1928. He declared that the Treaty of Paris contained no promise to the people of Porto Rico; that Porto Rico had a "greater degree of sovereignty over its internal affairs than does the government of any State or Territory of the United States";⁶³ that the United States Government represented Porto Rico as much as any state at the Havana Conference; and that the American Government had a clean record in Porto Rico. Economic conditions, education, and health had greatly improved. The President closed by stating that he did not wish to "discourage any reasonable aspiration of the people of Porto Rico."⁶⁴ He was silent, however, in regard to the demand for an elective governor.

56. *Congressional Record*, May 15, 1924, p. 8601.

57. *Ibid.* July 2, 1926, p. 127775.

58. *Hearings*, 70th Congress, 1st Session, 1928. "Popular Election of Governor of Porto Rico."

59. *Cf.* p. 454.

60. A resolution embodying such a proposal was introduced into the legislature by Senator Juan B. Soto. Its text is printed in *La Democracia*, February 13, 1928.

61. *Hearings*, 69th Congress, 1st Session, 1926. "Popular Election of Governor of Porto Rico," p. 8.

62. *Cf.* p. 446.

63. *But cf.* p. 444.

64. *Empire or Democracy*, *op. cit.*

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN PORTO RICO

The economic and social conditions of any people may be viewed from several standpoints. Its present situation may be compared, if data is available, with conditions in the past, or with conditions in other territories, or according to an absolute standard. In his letter of February 28, 1928 President Coolidge quoted a message from Dr. Cayetano Coll y Toste who described the condition of the people of Porto Rico at the time of writing, 1897. He spoke of the Porto Rican laborer as "one of the most unfortunate beings in the world." His food is "only putrid salt meat, codfish filled with rotten red spots, and Indian rice, and the man who harvests the best coffee in the world, who helps to gather into the troughs the sweetest grains of nature, and takes to pasture in the fields and meadows the beautiful calves, cannot raise to his lips the bit of meat, because the municipal tax places it out of his reach, and almost duplicates the price of the tainted codfish; coffee becomes to him an article of luxury through its high price, and of sugar he can only taste that filled with molasses and impurities. . ."

The authorities in Porto Rico, under the

direction of the Bureau of Insular Affairs at Washington, have made strenuous efforts to elevate the educational and physical condition of the Porto Rican population during the last twenty-seven years. President Coolidge has declared: "We found the people of Porto Rico poor and distressed, without hope for the future, ignorant, poverty-stricken, and diseased, not knowing what constituted a free and democratic government. We have progressed in the relief of poverty and distress, in the eradication of disease, and have attempted, with some success, to inculcate in the inhabitants the basic ideas of a free democratic government."

From the standpoint of growth in trade Porto Rico has made great progress under American rule. The total external trade has increased from \$17,500,000 in 1901 to about \$207,000,000 in 1927. The trade of Porto Rico has probably increased more rapidly than that of any other territory in the Caribbean.

Ninety per cent of the external trade of Porto Rico is with the continental United States.⁶⁵

Comparative Trade in the Caribbean*

	Population (Est. 1927)	Imports	Exports	Total	Per Capita
Cuba	3,568,552	\$257,384,000	\$322,705,000	\$580,089,000	\$162.55
Dominican Republic	1,022,485	27,784,000	31,179,000	58,963,000	57.67
Haiti	2,550,000	15,751,000	15,299,000	31,050,000	12.18
Jamaica	927,603	27,793,000	23,153,000	50,946,000	54.92
Porto Rico	1,420,000	97,583,000	104,460,000	202,043,000	142.28

* U. S. Department of Commerce. *Commerce Year Book, 1928.*

According to Buell, *Native Problem in Africa*, Vol. II, p. 977, the per capita trade of the richest colony in central Africa, the Gold Coast, is \$39.45; that of Uganda, \$12.20; that of Zanzibar, an island which produces most of the cloves of the world, \$81.46; and that of the mandate of South West Africa, \$110.65. Other per capita trade figures, according to the *Commerce Year Book, 1928*, are: the Philippines, \$23.08; India, \$6.02; and China, \$3.47. Since these figures are for foreign trade, they do not necessarily represent a true comparison in the standard of living of these countries. That is, a self-sufficient country may have at the same time a high standard of living and a low foreign trade.

It is estimated that wages paid to labor by the sugar industry have increased tenfold during the last 25 years. On the other hand, the average value of the products of all farms (large and small) has increased from a few dollars per acre in 1900 to nearly \$100 per acre at the present time, due to the high returns from sugar cane, tobacco, citrus fruits and pineapple. The leading agricultural products are sugar, tobacco,

coffee and fruits. While most of the sugar and tobacco exports go to the United States, most of the coffee is sent to foreign markets, such as Cuba, Germany and Spain. The third largest export consists of needlework.

The sugar industry occupies a predominant place in the Island. "Of the total acreage under cultivation 34.5 per cent is

65. For the effect of the tariff policy, and for the profits of American corporations in Porto Rico, cf. p. 454.

devoted to sugar cane; 49.8 per cent of the aggregate value of agricultural products is sugar cane, and 25 per cent of the total number of workers in the Island earn their living in that industry. . ."⁶⁶ Nearly 79 per cent of the capital invested in manufacturing industries is in sugar factories, and sugar and molasses constitute between 50 and 60 per cent of the exports of the Island annually. The sugar plantations and centrals employ annually about 85,000 men. Sugar exports have increased from 69,000 tons in 1900 to 575,000 tons in 1927.

Sugar cane is grown upon large plantations and during the cutting season laborers bring the cane into centrals. Here the cane is ground by metallic rolls and the juice boiled until crystallized; the product is then bagged. This process requires intricate and costly machinery representing such heavy investment that few if any native Porto Ricans are able as individuals to acquire centrals of their own. Of the 47 centrals in Porto Rico, more than half are owned by corporations representing for the most part foreign interests. To justify such large investments, it is necessary for these corporations to acquire extensive sugar lands.⁶⁷

While sugar is grown upon a large-scale system, the production of coffee and tobacco has for the most part been in the hands of native Porto Ricans. Most of the coffee estates, which cover several hundred thousand acres and give employment to about 200,000 people, are located in the interior mountainous districts. It is estimated that coffee production has decreased one-third since Spanish times. The production is about 185 pounds per acre in comparison with 810 pounds in Colombia and 600 pounds in Guatemala. The coffee industry suffered especially from the 1928 hurricane.⁶⁸

About 40,000 acres in Porto Rico are

given over to tobacco cultivation. In 1927 the tobacco crop suffered from over-production and poor quality.⁶⁹ About 150 continental Americans are engaged in growing fruit.

The agricultural development of Porto Rico has been materially assisted by an admirable Department of Agriculture. Its work has been especially effective in combating mosaic diseases and in experimenting with the best types of sugar varieties.⁷⁰ Largely as a result of its efforts sugar production in Porto Rico has increased about 40 per cent during the last ten years, although the acreage under production has remained fairly constant. Material aid to the small farmer in Porto Rico, has been given in recent years by the Federal Land Bank, a branch of which was established in San Juan in 1921. By means of this agency Porto Rican farmers have been able to borrow money at reasonable rates, and they have been encouraged to organize co-operative marketing associations. Porto Ricans state that many tobacco farmers have been saved from bankruptcy by means of aid from the land bank.

To promote the welfare of the laboring classes, the government has established a Mediation and Conciliation Commission which intervened in 38 out of 43 labor disputes in 1927, settling 36 upon a basis satisfactory to both parties. The government has also established a Workmen's Relief Commission which supervises a system of workingmen's compensation,⁷¹ and it maintains a labor bureau, having ten inspectors, who supervise the administration of the labor laws.

Moreover, the Department of the Interior has constructed an excellent road system and many public buildings; while the Insular Police, a force having only 700 men, or one for every 2,000 people, has been highly praised.⁷²

66. Garcia, *Book of Porto Rico*, "New Industries," p. 635.

67. For the social effect, cf. p. 454.

68. In 1928 a bill was introduced into Congress imposing a duty of 10 cents a pound on coffee imported into Porto Rico. The purpose of this bill was to prevent the importation into Porto Rico of cheap coffee which would compete with the local market, and which might be exported under the name of Porto Rican coffee. Cf. House Report No. 885, 70th Congress, 1st Session.

69. *Report of Governor of Porto Rico, 1927*, p. 37.

70. Rosenfeld, A. H., *A Monogram of Sugar-Cane Varieties*, San Juan, 1927.

71. For criticism, cf. p. 443.

72. Bennett, *The Book of Porto Rico*, "The Police Department," p. 273.

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN PORTO RICO

Perhaps the most notable work of the Porto Rican administration in advancing the welfare of the Porto Rican people has been in the field of education and public health. The work of the Public Health Department has been described by President Coolidge as follows:⁷³

"There exists today in Porto Rico a department of health in all respects modern and including in its activities all branches of modern public health work. Not of least importance as showing the marked progress in health matters in Porto Rico in recent years is the fact that it is completely manned by Porto Ricans. The improvement in the health conditions of Porto Ricans is not fully indicated by the reduction in death rate alone, though this rate has been almost divided by two since the early dates of American sovereignty of the island. The practical eradication of smallpox which had existed continuously in the island for over 40 years prior to American sovereignty, the diagnosis of the so-called tropical anemia which affected the great bulk of the population of Porto Rico, the discoveries in Cuba in the method of propagating yellow fever were concrete benefits to the health situation in Porto Rico and have been of continuous benefit."

The Porto Rican service is preventive; it leaves actual treatment for the most part to municipal doctors and to private practitioners. One of the worst diseases in Porto Rico which at one time threatened the health of 90 per cent of the population is hookworm. The spreading of this disease can be prevented only by sanitation of the soil; and Porto Rico now requires every hut to have a sanitary latrine. Under the auspices of the Bureau of Rural Sanitation of the Department of Health, a total of 86,326 latrines had been erected by 1926.⁷⁴

The Department of Public Health is also installing municipal health units, each equipped with a doctor and nurses. Half of the expenditures for this purpose is borne by the Porto Rican Government, a quarter by the municipality concerned, and a quarter by the Rockefeller Foundation. The Department also maintains a valuable Bureau of Vital Statistics. The University of Porto Rico has recently opened a school of tropical medicine, in cooperation with Columbia University.

The Education Department also has done important work. The number of children in school has increased from about 29,182 in 1899 to 213,321 in 1927. Illiteracy has declined during the same period from 83 per cent to below 40 per cent. About one in ten has a practical knowledge of English. School expenditures have increased from \$288,098 to more than \$4,000,000 annually. About 38 per cent of the total expenditures of Porto Rico go to education. The number of teachers has increased from 525 to 4,483. At present 178 of these teachers are from the continental United States. Most of the seventeen high schools have continentals as principals, while the University is also headed by a continental, Dr. Thomas E. Benner.

Until recently at least the educational system of Porto Rico has aimed at making the population literate, and especially in the English language. An Educational Survey Commission from Teachers' College, Columbia University, which studied the system at the request of the Porto Rican legislature, reported in 1926 that "the curriculum of the elementary school is now so completely a language curriculum that content subjects are almost altogether crowded out. Children who are to stay in school but a few years are now given instruction in English which will not be carried to a point that makes it a useful tool, while they receive no instruction in health, hygiene, the civic virtues and the world about. . . The time now given to English in the first three grades at least is needed imperatively for instruction in matters that are at the present time wholly neglected."⁷⁵ It declared that "the extreme academic character of high school education" prepared young people for white-collar jobs which do not exist. It recommended that the teaching of English be discontinued below the fourth grade and that emphasis should be placed upon instruction in agriculture, industrial work and public health. While the first recommendation was not adopted, the curriculum in the schools has recently been revised.

73. Letter to Governor Towner of February 28, 1928.

74. Report of Commissioner of Health, 1926, p. 41.

75. A Survey of the Public Educational System of Porto Rico, p. 30, 33.

Jamaica and Haiti, Comparative Statistics, 1926

	TOTAL		PER CAPITA	
	JAMAICA	PORTO RICO	JAMAICA	PORTO RICO
Revenues	\$10,447,506.37	\$12,010,624.50	\$11.15	\$ 8.58
Expenditures	9,956,833.53	11,422,852.28	10.63	8.16
Educational Expenditures	776,248.65	4,007,125.45	0.83	2.91
Public Health Expenditures	423,517.18	1,161,359.54	0.45	0.83
Number in Schools	123,963	213,321		
Number in Hospitals	10,849	20,525		
Population (est.)	937,000	1,400,000		

The expenditures on education, public health and other activities in Porto Rico have been met from the local budget. Except for the 1928 Hurricane Loan, the United States Government has made no advances to the Island.

Another effort to improve the social condition of the people has taken the form of prohibition. The Organic Act of 1917 provided for the enforcement of prohibition in Porto Rico at the end of one year, subject to a plebiscite held at the request of ten per cent of the voters. Such a plebiscite was held and resulted in a victory for prohibition. Enforcement difficulties have, however, arisen which are similar to those in the United States. It is estimated that there are at least 10,000 stills in Porto Rico today.⁷⁶

Despite these efforts of the administration, the social and economic conditions of Porto Rico are still regarded in certain respects as unsatisfactory. In the first place wages are low. Ordinary agricultural laborers receive wages in some cases as low as fifty and sixty cents a day. At present sugar laborers receive as much as \$1.25 a day. Between 1915 and 1925 the wages of a sugar laborer increased 26.5 per cent but the cost of the family diet increased 48.6 per cent.⁷⁷ At a time when the average wage was from sixty cents to \$1 a day the cost of a family diet in the sugar districts was 55.4 cents.⁷⁸ As a rule, the sugar worker is employed only five or six months out of the year, and his existence during the period of unemployment is very difficult. A workers' organization in Porto Rico has stated that three-fifths of the popu-

lation is lacking in permanent employment⁷⁹ A government report says: "In addition to the many hundreds of young men and women that are annually turned out by grammar schools, high schools and the University, the number of idle people in every municipality increases rapidly and makes unemployment a serious problem."⁸⁰

In his 1920 report the Acting Commissioner of Agriculture declared that "out of 1,300,000 inhabitants, more than 300,000 are poor, barefooted people who live in huts without any comfort and even lack the means of securing the most elementary necessities of life."⁸¹

Although at one time Porto Rico produced quantities of foodstuffs and although there is still some land available for this purpose, Porto Rico today relies upon imports for about half of her food supply. At present about 35 per cent of the total imports of Porto Rico consists of food products. In 1927 rice was the leading single import, amounting to \$8,149,443 in value; wheat flour amounted to \$3,229,992, and dried beans amounted to \$1,376,713. In 1927 the Island imported four and a half million pounds of condensed milk. Partly because of the high cost of imported food, the diet of the Porto Rican *jibaro* has been regarded by some authorities as defective. A recent writer states, "Porto Rico is raising at the outside only one-half the food she needs. This is much too small a proportion for any country to produce and is not only economically unsound, but has considerable bearing on the public health. Fresh foods are better

79. *Hearings, 1926, "Porto Rico,"* p. 32.

80. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor, 1924-25,* p. 243.

76. Cf. the address of Mr. Frank Buckley, Prohibition Administrator, printed in *Porto Rico Progress*, July 12, 1928.

77. *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor, 1925-26,* p. 232. *Informe del Negociado del Trabajo a la Asamblea Legislativa de Puerto Rico, 1927,* p. 5.

78. *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1925,* p. 60.

81. *Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, 1920,* p. 503. Cf. also Miss Helen V. Bary, *Child Welfare in the Insular Possessions of the United States*, Part I, "Porto Rico," United States Children's Bureau, Bureau Publication, 127, 1923; the articles of Mr. G. L. Cady, *The Congregationalist*, May and June, 1928, "On the Trail of Columbus"; and Tizol, *El Malestar Económico de Puerto Rico*, San Juan, 1925.

than dried, canned or preserved, and transportation places a prohibitive price on the very foods that we ought to raise, i.e., fresh vegetables and fruits. . . There is a tendency at present for the diet to be high in carbohydrate and fat, and low in protein. This defect is not apt to be corrected by the common foods now consumed in the Islands. More milk and fresh green vegetables should be raised and consumed. . .⁸²

Although the public health service has made great progress in reducing the death rate in Porto Rico⁸³ the infant mortality rate is still high. For Porto Rico as a whole the rate ranges from 148 to 150 per thousand annually, and in parts of the Island it reaches 314 per thousand.⁸⁴ The highest rate in American cities is 97 per thousand. The Porto Rican rate has been attributed partly to the fact that people live in overcrowded conditions and that infants often do not secure adequate milk.⁸⁵ About nine per cent of the deaths in Porto Rico annually are due to tuberculosis, a disease which is attributed in part to undernourishment.⁸⁶ There are 20,000 people suffering from active tuberculosis in Porto Rico but only 250 hospital beds for them.⁸⁷

Many of the statements purporting to show that Porto Rico is impoverished and that many Porto Ricans live upon a bare level of existence have been criticized as exaggerated. It has also been stated that while poverty exists in Porto Rico it is no greater than, if as great as, the poverty found elsewhere in the Caribbean and in other parts of the world. Those who hold this point of view declare that if Porto Rico imports food, this is partly due to the disinclination of the Porto Ricans to engage in agriculture. They declare that there is still land available in the Island for cultivation, and that foodstuffs may easily be grown, if the Porto Rican people have the energy to do so. Still others declare that

the present conditions in Porto Rico are due in large part to (1) overpopulation, and (2) the economic system which has grown up there under American rule.

Porto Rico is one of the most densely populated territories in the world. In 1925 the population was estimated at about 1,400,000 which would give the Island a density of about 400 per square mile. Porto Rico has seven times the population density of the Dominican Republic and six times that of Cuba.⁸⁸

The birth rate has increased from 20.5 per thousand in 1901 to 39.0 in 1925. The birth rate in the United States proper is about 22.5. The death rate on the other hand has declined from 36.5 in 1901 to 22.4 in 1925.⁸⁹⁻⁹⁰ The death rate in the United States is 12.2. Thus in 1925 the excess of births over deaths in Porto Rico was nearly 17 per thousand. As a remedy for this situation, the artificial limitation of population might be proposed. Any such suggestion would meet the opposition of the Catholic Church which is strong in Porto Rico and in any event it would not make provision for the existing population. Emigration as a solution also also been proposed.

EMIGRATION FROM THE ISLAND

Already a number of Porto Ricans have emigrated. The number of Porto Ricans in New York City is estimated between 45,000 and 100,000. Others have gone to California, Arizona, Hawaii, and Santo Domingo. About 9,000 Porto Ricans emigrated to the continental United States in 1927.⁹¹

The Dominican Government has offered to grant Porto Rican emigrants free land and tools, and to provide such communities with schools, churches and dispensaries, if the Porto Rican Government will pay the expense of transport to Santo Domingo.⁹² Emigration is under the general control of

82. Cook, Dr. D. H., *Porto Rico Review of Public Health and Tropical Medicine*, August, 1927, "Some Aspects of the Food Problem of Porto Rico."

83. Cf. p. 450.

84. *Report of the Commissioner of Health of Porto Rico, 1926*, p. 105.

85. Bary, H. V., *op. cit.*

86. Garcia, *The Book of Porto Rico*, "The Solution of the Tuberculosis Problem," p. 359.

87. Pastor, Dr. J. R., *The Most Important Bill before the Legislature, Porto Rico Progress*, April 19, 1928. Legislation was introduced to meet this problem in the spring of 1928.

88. In 1899 the population was about 953,000; in 1910, 1,118,000; in 1920, 1,299,000. The increase in the last ten years was 16.3% in comparison with 14.9% for the continental United States. *Fourteenth Census of the United States; Population: Porto Rico*, p. 1.

89-90. *Educational Survey of Porto Rico*, p. 67.

91. *Report of the Governor, 1927*, p. 41.

92. *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor, 1924-1925*, p. 241.

the Bureau of Labor, a branch of the Department of Agriculture and Labor. The Bureau passes on all requisitions for emigrants and sees to it that the conditions of passage and employment are satisfactory. Since Porto Ricans are American citizens they may freely enter the continental United States where they may be absorbed in industries which formerly depended upon a foreign supply now restricted by immigration laws. On the other hand, emigration from Porto Rico is handicapped by the absence of cheap transportation facilities and by the disinclination of the Porto Ricans to leave their homes. Opportunities for employment in the continental United States are also limited.

Finally, it is suggested that Porto Rico should follow the example of other densely

populated countries and become industrialized. Except for the sugar centrals and many cigar and cigarette establishments, there are few industries in Porto Rico. The creation of new industries is handicapped by the lack of capital. The manufacture of toys, cocoanut oil, shoes, tapioca, bags, and fruit juices has been proposed.⁹³ Progress has already been made in the clothing and needlework industry, which now employs about 40,000 laborers. Embroidery and ready-made clothing were exported to the value of \$9,000,000 in 1928—the third largest item in Porto Rico's export trade. Much of the needlework is done by women at home where they receive only a few cents a day.⁹⁴ The conditions under which these women work has aroused the anxiety of the Bureau of Labor.

THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM AND THE AMERICAN TARIFF

Finally the economic system which the United States has allowed to grow up in the Island has been held partly responsible for the present condition of the Porto Rican people. Before the United States acquired Porto Rico, the system of peasant proprietorship, according to local historians, prevailed; and the Island produced a large part of the food which its population consumed.⁹⁵

Following annexation, the United States extended to Porto Rico its tariff laws. It follows the policy of tariff assimilation; that is, the same tariff duties are applied to foreign imports entering Porto Rico as are applied in the United States. But trade between Porto Rico and the United States is as free as between two states of the Union.⁹⁶ The fact that 90 per cent of Porto Rico's external trade is with the continental United States is attributed to this tariff system. While the trade of Porto Rico has greatly increased as a result of this incentive, there is reason to believe that the tariff policy of the United States has accentuated the de-

velopment of one export product—sugar—at the expense of a diversified agriculture, and that the profits from the sugar industry have gone, because of the system under which that industry operates, to corporations. Because of the quality of its land and for other reasons, the cost of producing sugar in Porto Rico is higher than in adjoining territories, such as Cuba and Santo Domingo.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the sugar industry is the leading industry in the Island. The predominant place of sugar is due primarily to the fact that in comparison with competitors Porto Rico enjoys a privileged position in the American market, while Dominican sugar must pay a duty of \$2.20 a hundredweight upon entering the United States and Cuban sugar, \$1.76.⁹⁸

Aided by this tariff incentive, sugar production has increased, as we have seen, and the business has proved profitable to the sugar corporations. The stockholder who originally invested \$10,000 in 100 shares of common stock in the Fajardo Sugar Company has received up to date dividends in

93. Garcia, *Book of Porto Rico*, "New Industries," p. 635.

94. *Undécimo Informe Annual Del Negociado del Trabajo*, p. 6.

95. Muñoz, *The Book of Porto Rico*, "The Small Landowner as a Factor in Porto Rico's Agricultural Development," p. 729.

96. Mentioning Porto Rico and Formosa, the United States Tariff Commission says, "In the tariffs of these countries the schedules of duties are framed primarily for the purpose of protecting the domestic manufacturer in the home market; and these schedules are extended to the colonies for the purpose of holding the colonial market for the producers of the mother country." *Colonial Tariff Policies*, p. 33.

97. The United States Tariff Commission estimates cost of sugar production in 1918-1919 in Porto Rico at 5.802 cents a pound in comparison with 4.104 cents for Cuba and 9.304 cents for Louisiana. *Tariff Information Survey, Sugar and Molasses*, 1921, p. 34.

98. Because of the reciprocity treaty between the United States and Cuba of December 11, 1902.

stock and cash amounting to \$123,962.⁹⁹ Except for 1913-1914 dividends on the common stock of the Central Aguirre Sugar Company were regularly paid from 1909 to 1920 at rates varying from 5 per cent to 60 per cent. On the new stock, issued in 1920, dividends are now paid amounting to 33 1/3 per cent annually.¹⁰⁰

With the exception of two years, Porto Rico has had a "favorable balance" of trade since 1903. In 1927 Porto Rico exported above \$9,257,000 more than she imported. This difference may represent profits sent to outside stockholders.

A number of estimates have been made to the effect that half of the profits of industry leaves Porto Rico annually.¹⁰¹ While there is no way of determining exactly whether any such estimate is correct, it is natural that a share of the profits should be sent to foreign stockholders who have invested their capital in the Island—profits which under a system of peasant production would remain with the Porto Rican farmer.

The production of sugar requires a large acreage, and the sugar corporations have consequently purchased land from Porto Rican proprietors. They have paid the market value for land and the Porto Ricans have sold voluntarily. Yet many of them have squandered the sums thus received, and have moved into towns, where they do not have their former agricultural basis of existence. The number of farms decreased from 58,371 in 1910 to 41,078 in 1920—a decrease of 29.6 per cent. Farms under 20 acres in size decreased 39 per cent.¹⁰² With the decline in farms has gone a decline in the local production of food. There is still land available for the cultivation of food-stuffs, but many Porto Ricans, because of their own inclination and the attraction of the sugar centrals, have become dependent upon this industry for their existence. Before the American occupation there was a live stock industry in Porto Rico, which provided the population with its milk supply.

Opinions differ as to the value of this industry from the standpoint of food; but the sugar corporations have purchased much of the land on the coast formerly occupied by stock with the result that this industry has declined,¹⁰³ rather than improved, as it has done in Santo Domingo.

Perhaps it is fruitless to speculate as to the condition of Porto Rico had the United States established a tariff against Porto Rican sugar. It is possible to argue that the foreign trade of Porto Rico would not be as great today but that the Island would be economically self-sufficient, and wealth more evenly distributed than under the present system. According to a publication distributed by the Porto Rican Chamber of Commerce, only 15 per cent of the wealth of the Island is in the hands of native Porto Ricans.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, Porto Ricans assert that the tariff policy of the United States operates to increase the cost of living. The American duty on rice is two cents a pound, which virtually obliges the Porto Ricans to purchase rice—the largest article in their diet—from Louisiana and Texas rather than from cheaper foreign sources of supply. Venezuela is only thirty-six hours from Porto Rico—much closer than the continental United States—yet the American tariff prevents the development of a trade by which Porto Rico might import meat, cocoa and petroleum from Venezuela in return for her products.¹⁰⁵ Likewise Porto Rico is prevented from developing reciprocal trade relations with her neighbors in the Caribbean.

Two remedies for certain features in the present economic system have been proposed. The first is tariff autonomy, and the second is agrarian reform. The proposal has frequently been made,¹⁰⁶ that the Porto Rican Government should be empowered to enter into commercial agreements with her neighbors and to regulate the duties upon foreign products entering into Porto Rico. This would enable the territory to find sources of food as cheaply as possible and

99. *The Story of the Fajardo Sugar Company of Porto Rico*, p. 3.

100. I.e., \$1.50 a quarter on a \$20 share. *Manual of Sugar Companies*, 1928, Farr & Company, New York, p. 9.

101. *Hearings, 1926, "Porto Rico,"* p. 27.

102. *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920. Agriculture. Porto Rico.*

103. Bague, Dr. J., *The Book of Porto Rico*, "The Live-stock Industry," p. 629.

104. Capo, *The Island of Porto Rico*, p. 61.

105. Arellano, *The Book of Porto Rico*, "Commercial Treaties," p. 670.

106. Cf. p. 447.

to develop trade where the natural advantage is greatest.

Secondly, agrarian reform has been attempted. In a large number of colonies throughout the world, the administering power has established certain safeguards, on behalf of the native population, against the uncontrolled entrance of foreign capital. Apparently wishing to assume such an obligation, the Congress of the United States in May 1900 passed a joint resolution stating that every corporation engaged in agriculture in Porto Rico shall by its charter be restricted to the ownership and control of land not exceeding 500 acres.¹⁰⁷ The resolution did not contain any penalty clause, and as a result, it was not enforced.

In January 1918 President Wilson, in response to a section in the Jones law, presented to the United States Congress a report showing that 477 partnerships and corporations in Porto Rico held in excess of 500 acres, a total of 763,396 acres of land.¹⁰⁸

The Porto Rican legislature periodically considers bills designed to put into effect the restriction imposed in the 1900 resolution. In 1925 it asked Congress to give the local legislature power to raise the limit of land

which might be thus held from 500 to 2,000 acres, to impose additional and progressive taxes on all property owned or controlled in excess of 500 acres, and to provide for the forfeiture of all land held in violation of the prohibition. Congress has, however, failed to act and corporations continue to hold land apparently in violation of the 1900 law.

Such are some of the conditions in Porto Rico today. Only a long study by competent investigators can determine exactly how serious these conditions are; and whether or not present conditions are due to inherent climatic or physical conditions, to overpopulation, or to the economic system which has grown up in the Island, or to all of these causes. Only long study will show whether legislative remedies are necessary, and if so, what form they should take.

Porto Ricans have urged that the Congress of the United States send a commission to investigate the economic conditions in the Island. While Congress has not done so, the Brookings Institution, Washington, has recently dispatched a number of experts for this purpose, and their report may be of great importance to the future of the Island.

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107. 31 Statutes, United States, 716.

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